

Gravel (3) described positive rabies in mongoose and suggested that sporadic cases of rabies where the dog bite or lick is not traced may result from a mongoose bite, either directly or through the mongoose infecting the domestic carnivora, and that 'rabies smoulders in forests and flares in villages and towns'. Gravel (4) further advances the view that in a state of nature (in the wild carnivora) there must be acute and chronic infections. 'Biologically it is not in the best interest of a parasite to be lethal without exception. By being so it would exhaust its nidus and become extinct.'

Mr. Daver in his article suggests that the vulture may play such a part in nature. It is theoretically possible that a vulture may carry rabies virus from dead or moribund rabid animals and then on pecking a healthy one may transmit the virus and thus spread rabies; but this would appear to be a most uncommon mode of spread. In the case of a tiger the infection may come as a result of combat with a rabid tiger, dog, jackal, mongoose or a rodent.

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5. WILD ELEPHANT SEEKS ASSISTANCE

The following incident experienced by my mahout and myself, will undoubtedly be of interest to your readers.

In April last, coming down the bed of the Bargang river one evening on my male elephant, we crossed a very recent track of a single elephant with her small calf followed by a large tiger. The tracks were so fresh (water was still discoloured in the footprints) that we expected to hear of some domestic trouble very soon. We had not long to wait, for all of a sudden there was tremendous loud trumpeting, with intermittent screams coming from the forest and about 200 yards in. We immediately made for that direction, but as we got nearer to where the sound was coming from, we came into terribly thick cane, with the usual 3 inch thorns, so we had to cut our way through, foot by foot, which delayed us considerably.

All of a sudden a mother elephant appeared holding up her front foot, which was bleeding, and placed her trunk on my elephant's trunk, as much as to say, 'Do come and see what awful trouble I

am in!' She turned and led the way; we followed, and approximately 10 yards off, we came on to her calf which was about 3 ft. 6 in. high, standing with its head completely scalped, and holding up its front foot, which was turning round on a piece of skin—its foot, all but severed. With its little trunk about a foot or so long, it kept feeling its terrible head wounds.

We kept moving around slowly, trying to obtain a view of the tiger for fully half an hour, but due to the necessity of continual cutting, we never saw it, although we could see its footprints and smell it.

Whilst we were hunting for the tiger she stood by her calf, never leaving it after having led us to it. We also stayed alongside the calf for full 5 minutes while she herself was holding up her bleeding foot.

It was getting dark, and we had very reluctantly to leave that sad scene and I with a lump in my throat. I have been asked by people why I did not shoot the baby, and put it out of its misery. To me, and to all people who have been associated with elephants, it would have been sheer murder, and mother elephant would never have forgiven me. The baby must have died shortly afterwards.

'RAJBARI',
UPPER SHILLONG,
ASSAM,
September 6, 1951.

FRANK NICHOLLS

6. HABITS OF THE MONGOOSE*

As I shall shortly be leaving India after nearly forty-six unbroken years in the country, I bought a copy of your Book of Indian Animals to take to England with me.

One of the first things I turned to was the chapters on mongooses, as these have always been my favourite pets. I have kept more than a dozen at different times.

Regarding family life and care of the young: I wonder if it is known that the young occasionally remain with the mother even after she has had another litter, and actually help her to look after them and teach them to hunt. I can give you one case.

I had a female mongoose named Tilly. When she was full grown, she had a litter of two young ones in her kennel in the store room; but she found me looking at them one day, and straightaway removed them to a burrow in the church garden. She used to come in every evening and beg at the table at dinner time, after eating her meal of raw meat or raw fish. When her youngsters were big enough to eat solid food, she took to bringing them with her. I named them Peter and Bessie. One evening, when Peter and Bessie were about six months old, I was surprised to see six mongooses walk into the house. There were Tilly, Peter and Bessie and three babies about half the size of rats. One of the babies was completely paralysed